


Entr'acte



**The Opera
Supers of
Iowa City
Newsletter**

Volume V, Number 1

October 1989

Editor: Arthur Canter, 30 Brookfield Dr., Iowa City, IA 52245

Letter from the Editor

As we begin our fifth year of continuous operation we can look back at our accomplishments with a feeling of deep satisfaction and pride. What new or different paths do we follow in the future? Do we continue along the same comfortable and familiar route? Do we take on new challenges that may extend us even deeper into realms beyond opera and things operatic?

The Opera Supers of Iowa City has already begun to manifest itself as a more general support group for the School of Music as if it were a "friends of music" organization. Do we go further? What divides us from the Hancher Guild? Is it the nature of the source of the support for music performances that take place in Hancher and/or Clapp Recital Hall?

The division of "labor" and energy, so-to-speak, may not be as blurred to us as it is to others. Despite the fact that many Supers are also members of Hancher Guild, there is no interference with the functional roles from one to the other. The Supers know who they are and can keep their unique identity no matter what.

I bring this up for we may be asked to participate in activities that were not foreseen when the Supers began five years ago. It is not for me, the editor of your newsletter, to make these decisions or even to propose them, but rather as the opportunity arises to inform you of the issues. By attending our meetings you can provide your valuable input, express your concerns, and openly support or oppose whatever is being proposed.

We are not a rubber stamp group that automatically agrees to whatever some administrator or dominant member of the group proposes for the Opera Supers. We do not make the policy for the School of Music, Opera Theater, or any division of the university. What we do is agree or not agree to assist, as a support group, in furthering the goals set by such policy if and when it is appropriate for us to do so. However, the process we go through in reaching our decisions may serve as important feedback to the administrators. After all, we are a sample of the sophisticated musical-performance-consumer public as well as supporters of the University of Iowa. Thus, if the Opera Theater wants to put on a specific opera for its spring offering and wants to hire professionals

for the major roles, by sharing this notion with us there is the opportunity to get our reactions to the proposal.

The Supers do not decide various issues, but the Supers do decide how to support whatever production has been chosen by the Opera Theater. There are various limiting factors: the University, the School of Music, the size of the community, the availability of singers, the degree of financial support, etc., that affect the choice of opera productions, the frequency of offerings, and the extent to which they can be staged. By now most of you realize that we cannot do the Wagner Ring Cycle here. Then there is the dilemma of the box office appeal and the ability to put on a production to match the reputation of the work. Can it be done with all student singers? If professionals are to be hired for some roles, where does the money come from? On the other hand, if the work is new or is not well known, will it draw enough tickets to help pay for its costs? Should this matter in a university setting? If it shouldn't, who picks up the bill? Is it possible to put on more than two major productions a year? How about concert (unstaged) performances of the unusual and/or the standard works? Will the local public buy tickets if there are no horses, dogs, chickens, goats, pigs, children, or even "cute supers" in the cast? Aren't you glad you are not the one who has to decide these things?

Please do let me know your thoughts on such matters.

September 11th Meeting Report

There was a good turnout for this first meeting of 1989-90. New members were introduced and longtime members reacquainted. Dr. Marilyn Somville, director of the School of Music, reported on the plans for raising funds for the future. It will be possible to have a donation box in the Hancher lobby during University Symphony concerts. When materials are available for the purpose, it will also be possible to have a sales table in Hancher to sell t-shirts, posters, etc., at appropriate times. The donation box will also be placed in the lobby of Clapp Recital Hall when School of Music events are performed there.

A series of benefit concerts that will feature ensembles and soloists from the music faculty and selected students is also being planned. Both series and individual tickets to the benefit concerts will be sold, with special "patron tickets" available for the series. All proceeds will go to the School of Music Opportunity Fund for scholarships. Sponsors for the events are also being sought.

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A Letter of Thanks for Opera Theater

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Every Opera Theater offering I've been lucky enough to see has offered excellent voices and acting, imaginative costumes and sets (usually designed by our own Margaret Wenk, although for *Gondoliers* they were rented), a splendid chorus and orchestra—and what I think is Glass's unique contribution, a marvelous feel for ensemble which pulls everything together and makes it work.

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The university libraries, budget cuts and all, continue to be an academic and community asset. Perhaps 50 or 100 years from now the Laser Center, too, will be an academic and community asset and provide in-depth, hands-on educational experience to undergraduates and graduates. Right now that is exactly what the UI Opera Theater is doing extremely well, and we are all luckier for it. The university's music department is one reason I chose to move back to Iowa City—this nicest of all possible places to live. It was an even better reason than I thought at the time.

—Betty McCollister
Iowa City

Do You Have a Favorite *Tosca* Recording?

Puccini's *Tosca* has been a popular subject for recordings for both the opera as a whole and for its single arias. Every soprano, tenor, and baritone striving for recognition as an opera singer will sooner or later try the famous aria as sung by Tosca, Cavaradossi, or Scarpia. One can go back to the earliest days of acoustic horn recording from the wax cylinder to the shellac disc and locate an aria from *Tosca* sung by the great singers of opera. This has continued with the advent of electrical microphone in the 1930's for the 78's, later with the LP, and now with the digitalized compact discs. The LP gave rise to a number of recordings of the complete opera, some of which have been or will be remastered and reissued on compact disc. It would be interesting for the readers of *ENTRE'ACTE* to share with us the identity of their favorite *Tosca*, Cavaradossi, and Scarpia that they have heard either live or on records.

It could be a particular rendition of an aria, or the interpretation of a role, or the perfection of an ensemble that has provided you with an unforgettable experience. Share it with the rest of us. If we were to make a composite recording of the complete opera *Tosca*, whom would you choose to sing each role? (With dubbing techniques we could easily do just that.) Would you want to know my choices? Share yours with me, and I'll return the favor in the next *ENTRE'ACTE*.

National Association of Teachers of Singing

The bi-annual three-state (Iowa, Illinois, Missouri) meeting of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS to you) will be held in Iowa City the weekend of November 3-4. This meeting will draw about 300 persons—teachers and students—and the events are open to the public. Competitions in singing are featured. The opening round is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 3. The second round will take place Saturday morning. The finals of the competition are scheduled for 2:15 p.m. at Clapp Recital Hall. The finals, in particular, may be of interest to Supers.

A problem arises because the meeting coincides with a Saturday Iowa football game, which interfered severely with the availability of hotel/motel space to accommodate the NATS attendees. They have had to seek rooms all around the adjacent communities. The need is for back-up space. If any reader can put up a NATS participant for the Friday night, in case this is needed, please call Jocelyn Carmichael, c/o School of Music, or Mona Shaw.

Flute Force Comes to Iowa

FLUTE FORCE, a nationally-known flute quartet is coming to Iowa City on Saturday, October 28 (8:00 p.m. in Clapp Recital Hall). Volunteers are needed Saturday morning from 8-10 a.m. to assist with the registration for this event. Call Mona Shaw if you can help.

Welcome Back Rinde and Tommi Eckert

There will be a reception for Rinde and Tommi Eckert following the first performance of the Dresher/Eckert *Power Failure* on Friday night, October 27. The Supers will provide food for the performers, crew of the company, and guests. If you have not done so, get your tickets at the Hancher Box Office. *Power Failure* is like a contemporary opera, but don't use that designation to the university students, who will be turned away by the word "opera." Miriam Canter will be calling many of you for floral centerpieces, sandwich making, fruit, and desserts.

UI's Bijou Features Opera Series

The Bijou, UI's art film house located in the I.M.U. deserves applause for featuring this semester a series of seven excellent films of or inspired by opera. The schedule includes Ingmar Bergman's interpretation of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (Oct. 1 at 6:45 and Oct. 2 at 8:30 p.m.), Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* (Oct. 15 at 1:00 and Oct. 16 at 6:15 p.m.), Franco Zeffirelli's production of Verdi's *Otello* (Oct. 26 at 8:45 and Oct. 27 at 6:30 p.m. Carlos Saura adds flamenco dancing and a modern-day narrative to Bizet's *Carmen* (Nov. 2 at 7:00 and Nov. 3 at 8:15 p.m.), and Jürgen Syberberg displays his famous provocative style in his interpretation of Wagner's *Parsifal*. *Siegfried*, directed by Fritz Lang, is a 1926 silent film classic inspired by Wagner's *Ring* cycle (Nov. 6 at 7:00 and Nov. 7 at 9:00 p.m.). *Senso* is director Luchino Visconti's retelling of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* (Nov. 13 at 7:00 and Nov. 14 at 9:00 p.m. For more information about any of these films contact the I.M.U. Box Office, 335-3041.



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